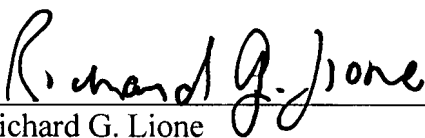


first published in English no earlier than the filing date of that application, December 22, 2003. The effective filing date of the present application is July 19, 2002, the date of priority Japan application 2002-211542, which was filed on July 19, 2002, and subsequently translated into English. In the latter regard, an English language translation of the priority application, and the requisite statement of its accuracy, is filed concurrently herewith. As such, the critical date for prior art effective on the above-identified application is July 19, 2002, after the date of the Kuroda et al. published application. Accordingly, the rejections based on the cited Kuroda et al. application should be withdrawn.

Respectfully submitted,


Richard G. Lione
Registration No. 19,795
Attorney for Applicants

Enclosure: Translation And Statement

BRINKS HOFER GILSON & LIONE
P.O. BOX 10395
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60610
(312) 321-4200